

News From Congressman Joe Sestak

eNewsletter – April 2009 Review

Dear Constituents of the 7th District,

Our efforts both in Washington and here in the 7th District to face and overcome the economic challenges we face together continued in April and were highlighted by the passage of the President's budget by the House and Senate. The budget institutes the key strategic investments in education, energy, and health care needed to retool our economy to be competitive in the future, while continuing the necessary actions already underway to promote recovery from the present global economic challenge. The budget resolution provides a strong framework for overcoming our immediate financial crisis and laying the groundwork for our future prosperity, while also reaffirming Congress's commitment to PAYGO budgeting by calling for commitments to health care reform, "green" job creation, and college affordability to be completely deficit-neutral

.

*Here in the 7th District, I am looking forward to the **Third 7th District Veterans Summit, "2009***

The Year of the Military Family.”

The Summit, which will take place o

n Monday, May 11 at Ridley High School from 6 to 9 pm, is free and open to all Veterans, Active Service Members, and military families in the Philadelphia region. This event is special because it was developed specifically to emphasize the systems, services, and organizations dedicated to support our Veterans and their families. I really hope to see you there – and if you are a Veteran or Service Member who is unable to attend, please send a friend or family member! For more information, contact Chip Ridewood: 610-892-8623, chip.ridewood@mail.house.gov. Sign up at:

www.sestak.house.gov

I truly believe that the measure of a society is the care and protection it provides its most vulnerable citizens. That’s why I am proud to have introduced the Patient Safety and Abuse Act of 2009. This legislation will help prevent those abuses by ensuring that patients in long-term care will not be at the mercy of those with a violent or criminal past. In other legislative efforts, I have supported House passage of the Credit Card Holders’ Bill of Rights, an increase in COPS funding to put hundreds of new officers on our streets, and several important measure to preserve and restore our environment.

Recently, our District has lost two baseball legends – Mickey Vernon, the Golden-Era great from Marcus Hook, and the inimitable Harry Kalas, who will forever be the Voice of the Phillies. We are all sad to see them go, but it was my distinct honor to read remembrances of both men into the Congressional Record.

Here in Media, my District Office continues to remain open seven days a week. We’ve handled more than 10,000 constituent cases — where the average cases addressed for a district is only 3,200. I have continued to enjoy visits to schools, hospitals and homes, Veterans organizations,

fire stations, local businesses, and many community organizations and events. If I can be of assistance, please feel free to contact my District Office at 600 N. Jackson St, Suite 203, Media, PA

19063, 610-892-8623.

And don't forget that to provide further access to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, each week my staff has continued to update my comprehensive Resource Directory, which provides specific information and contacts to the agencies that will be administering stimulus funds. The Directory is accessible from my Web site, www.sestak.house.gov.

Congressman Joe Sestak is now on Twitter. You can receive updates on the Congressman's daily events as well as links to information about legislation, YouTube clips and photographs from around the District. Sign up at <http://www.twitter.com/JoeSestak>

**For the most complete and up-to-date information on Congressman Sestak's work in Washington and in the 7th Congressional District, please visit <http://sestak.house.gov>. For help with a problem for which the Congressman can offer assistance, please call his District Office at 610-892-8623.*

Efforts to Restore our Economic Security

A Strategic Investment in America's Future

This week, I voted for final passage of President Obama's budget because it institutes the key strategic investments in education, energy, and health care needed to retool our economy to be competitive in the future, while continuing the necessary actions already underway to promote recovery from the present global economic challenge. The budget resolution provides a strong framework for overcoming our immediate financial crisis and laying the groundwork for our future prosperity, while also reaffirming Congress's commitment to PAYGO budgeting. The budget calls for health care reform, job creation in clean energy and energy efficiency, and college affordability to be completely deficit-neutral. It builds on the actions taken as part of the Recovery Act to prevent job losses and rebuild the nation's infrastructure and energy independence for the future; begins the strategic investment we must make on health care reform that is necessary to lower costs, improve quality, and expand coverage for the 46 million Americans who now lack health insurance, which costs this country more than \$100 billion annually in lost productivity; provides investment for rebuilding our educational system to provide an educated and skilled workforce able to function effectively in the future; reduces energy dependence and creates new jobs for the future by increasing investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency by 18% over 2009; and reduces the deficit by 50% over the next five years.

I want to make it clear to my constituents that I view this Nation's economic priorities and strategic investments as a two-stage process. First, we must be aggressive up front in confronting this economic crisis. If we do not act boldly now, we will face much larger—not smaller—deficits in the future. And our stimulus measures must take the form of these strategic investments in education, energy, and health care. These investments now will pay tremendous dividends in the future, in the form of greatly reduced energy and health care costs and a healthy, productive, competitive workforce that will drive our economic prosperity in the future. The second phase is to address the longer term, 'structural deficit' that the President has inherited, in the form of unsustainable spending for mandatory entitlements. As this recession ends, I will continue to work to address the long term structural funding issues that will cause our budget to become unsustainable by 2019 if these problems are not addressed. We will take the necessary steps to revitalize our economy now and then focus our efforts and attention on entitlement reform to reduce the deficit, taking into account Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other programs without losing benefits for those who are recipients of these programs.

The Credit Card Holders' Bill of Rights

This month, the House passed the Credit Card Holders' Bill of Rights Act of 2009. This Act would bar 'predatory' practices by the credit card industry, expand a number of disclosure requirements, prohibit certain practices related to interest rate charges, and restrict the ability of credit card companies to change the terms of accounts after they are established. Americans are hurting. They're hurting, and they do not need unfair lending or credit practices compounding the most difficult economic challenges we've seen in generations. We're all in this together—government, the public, and business. Lenders are entitled to earn a profit, but they must do so by acting transparently and in good faith.

Havertown Superfund Site to Receive up to \$5 million: The Havertown Superfund site will receive up to \$5 million in additional Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson announced that, nationwide, Superfund hazardous waste cleanup sites will receive \$600 million in new funding. This type of funding exemplifies the dual use of the stimulus the President and the Congress have enacted. This funding will have the immediate impact of stopping potential job cuts and adding new jobs. But we are not just spending for the sake of stimulus: this is a strategic investment in our long-term health and prosperity by cleaning up a dangerous blight in our community. I have been actively involved with this Havertown site since prior to taking office. I continue to meet with EPA officials, township leaders, and community groups to stay up-to-date on cleanup efforts and I am greatly encouraged to see this project receive the funding it needs.

Improvements to COPS Program Could Mean 436 New Officers for the 7th District: H.R. 1139, the COPS Improvement Act of 2009, which I supported and was passed by the House of Representatives, would allow for 436 new officers in the District, according to current estimates. Nationwide, the bill calls for putting 50,000 additional police officers on the street over the next 5 years—authorizing \$1.25 billion a year for COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) hiring grants, \$350 million a year for COPS technology grants, and \$200 million a year for hiring community prosecutors. In Pennsylvania, approximately 1,500 new police officers are expected to be hired through this legislation. The COPS program has been a major asset to our communities since it was started in 1994. This is an example of an effective program that is helping keep our communities safe, and I am proud to offer my continued support.

Stimulus Funds for Area Stream Restoration Projects: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has allocated \$250,000 in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's allotment for civil works programs for watershed projects in Delaware and Chester Counties. The \$250,000 in Recovery Act funds requires 20% non-federal matching funds. There are two stream restoration projects in the 7th Congressional District that, if they are able to provide matching funds, are being considered for that funding: Albert's Run in Springfield Township and Darby/Cobbs stream restorations in Haverford Township. Funding of the Albert's Run Stream Restoration Project in Springfield will allow the initiation of design for the restoration of approximately 1,100 feet of the "urban and degraded" stream. Funding of the Darby/Cobbs Stream Restoration Project in Haverford will allow the initiation of design for the restoration of channelized and eroded stream channels that contribute to flooding.

Honoring Our Nation's Veterans and Service Members

Come to the 2009 Veterans Summit: The Year of the Military Family

Event on May 11, 6-9pm at Ridley High School, will put Veterans, Active Military, and their Families in direct contact with service providers

I firmly believe that when a Veteran is hurting, a family is hurting. And, that the reverse is true—when a Veteran is secure, a family is secure. In these troubled economic times that notion is especially relevant. On Monday May 11 at Ridley High School from 6 to 9 pm, I will host the third *7th Congressional District Veterans Summit*, which is free and open to all Veterans, active service members, and their families in the Philadelphia region. This event is special because it was developed specifically to emphasize the systems, services, and organizations dedicated to support our Veterans *and their families*. There

are over 54,000 Veterans in the 7

th

Congressional district and over 15 million nationwide. I am determined to see that each is aware of the benefits to which they are entitled and uses every one of them to full effect. For more information, contact Chip Ridewood: 610-892-8623, chip.ridewood@mail.house.gov. There is no cost to attend.

Sign up at:

www.sestak.house.gov

.

P.I.T. Scholarship for Returning Veterans

This month, I was proud to announce with Pennsylvania Institute of Technology President John Strayer a program to provide full scholarships to P.I.T. for Veterans who have served in the military since September 11, 2001, and are residents of the 7th Congressional District. The Veterans Scholarship program was developed in response to the critical role education plays in the reintegration and future success of returning Veterans. The new initiative provides full scholarships to earn an associate's degree for as many qualified Veterans as can be accommodated by select programs at P.I.T. The deadline for applications is May 15 and awards for the 2009-2010 academic years will be announced on June 15. We owe a debt to our warriors. It is with tremendous pride that our Nation sends its sons and daughters to serve, and it should not only be with gratitude, but practical support and guidance, that we welcome them home. In my father's World War II generation, the GI Bill helped utilize the talents and capability of returning Veterans to spark an economic boom. We owe nothing less to the generation that has served in the wake of 9/11. That's why I'm proud to support this scholarship, as I have supported the 21st Century GI Bill, and why I have no higher priority than this Nation's Veterans.

Improving Veterans' Health Care

I commend the announcement by President Obama, Secretary Gates, and Secretary Shinseki that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs have taken the first step in creating a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record. Currently, there is no comprehensive system in place that allows for a streamlined transition of health care records between DOD and the VA. Both Departments will work together to define and build a system that will ultimately contain administrative and medical information from the day an individual enters military service throughout their military career, and after they leave the military. America's Veterans have earned the full support of their nation. There is a sacred trust between a nation and its warriors, and the measures announced today are a major step toward providing them the care they have earned. Never again should a service member fall through the cracks between the DOD and VA as they transition out of active duty, and never again should we lose sight of or turn our backs on anyone who has served this Nation honorably. I am especially pleased that this plan enacts

some of the very reforms that I have been fighting for in Congress.

Operation Not Forgotten: On April 17, 2009, I was proud join **Rachel Altschuler-Bruenjes, a Strath Haven High School graduate and a member of the Navy Reserves who served in Afghanistan, who returned to her alma mater to raise a flag that was flown over Camp Phoenix in Afghanistan.**

Rachel decided she needed to serve her country following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Prior to enlisting in the Navy, Rachel graduated from Smith College with a degree in Math and Fine Arts and completed an MBA from the University of Washington. It was while stationed at Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan, that Rachel and her colleagues decided to support Quabel Baji, a desperately poor school serving students in grades kindergarten through 12. In the spring of 2007, students from Strath Haven High School collected a large amount of school supplies to send to Afghanistan for

Operation Not Forgotten

, a program run by Navy volunteers. VFW Post #3460 then mailed the packages to Rachel at Camp Phoenix, and they were able to provide school supplies, toys, and clothing to the children and teachers of Quabel Baji.

Other Legislation & Events

The Patient Safety and Abuse Prevention Act

I have introduced in the House of Representatives legislation – the Patient Safety and Abuse Prevention Act – to prevent those with criminal histories from working within long-term care settings by creating a comprehensive nationwide system of background checks. The legislation would expand a highly successful three-year pilot program, which prevented more than 7,000 applicants with a history of substantiated abuse or a violent criminal record from working with and preying upon our elders and individuals with disabilities in long-term care settings.

The measure of a society is how well it looks after its most vulnerable citizens. Every day, too many of our Nation's seniors and disabled become victim to physical, emotional, or other abuse. This legislation will help prevent those abuses by ensuring that patients in long-term care will not be at the mercy of those with a violent or criminal past.

Honoring Two Baseball Legends

Remembering Constituent and Friend Harry Kalas

I would like to express my condolences on the passing of legendary Phillies announcer Harry Kalas, a constituent of the 7th Congressional District. Harry Kalas will be warmly remembered for his invaluable contributions to our national pastime of baseball, our community, and our Nation. Harry Kalas gave voice to so many of our dreams on the baseball field. I spent the past

35 years of my life traveling all around the world, and nothing meant home to me as much as the Philadelphia Phillies on a summer afternoon and hearing Harry Kalas declare: ‘

This one is outta here!

’ Harry was a veteran, father, husband, and a friend that we’re all proud to know and love. Click [here](#) to watch me reading a remembrance of Harry into the Congressional Record.

The Pride of Marcus Hook, Mickey Vernon

Baseball legend James Barton “Mickey” Vernon, a native of Marcus Hook, Pa. Mickey Vernon, was born on April 22, 1918, and passed away in September. He is a cherished figure in the baseball world and his community. In a year when the 7th Congressional District lost both Mickey Vernon and Harry Kalas, there is a temptation to feel great pain and sadness. That is understandable, but it is more in keeping with the lives of both men that we celebrate their greatness and decency. Click [here](#) to watch me honoring Mickey on the Floor of the House of Representatives.

Congressional Art Competition: Nearly 200 students, parents, and teachers gathered to celebrate the *2009 7th Congressional District Art Competition* held at the Wayne Art Center on April 20. An expert panel of professional artists evaluated pieces submitted by high school students from across the District and selected a winner and runner up in eight categories. Congratulations to Jessica Jahnle, a junior at Episcopal Academy, who in earned “Best in Show” of the district level competition. Jessica and a guest will be flown by Southwest Airlines to Washington, D.C., to attend a June 24 ceremony honoring winners from across the country; she will also be eligible to apply for a \$1,500 art school scholarship to the Savannah College of Art and Design. Her winning piece, “Kids on the Beach,” will be

professionally framed free of charge by Mr. Brad Montgomery of Montgomery Galleries and will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol for one year.

Safeguarding Civil Rights and Preventing Hate Crimes: On April 29, 2009, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1913, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, which I co-sponsored. The bill extends federal jurisdiction to hate crimes motivated by the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability, and provides assistance to state and local law enforcement to streamline the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. This legislation is about respecting and protecting all Americans, and it is about giving our state and local law enforcement the tools they need to keep our communities safe for everyone. When I served in the Navy, I served to protect the freedoms of all Americans—and that includes freedom from hatred and discrimination. As a Congressman, I'm proud to continue that fight.

Happy Earth Day

On Earth Day, House Passes Two Important Pieces of Environmental Legislation

April 22 was Earth Day, and I was pleased to mark the occasion by voting for two important

environmental bills: H.R. 1580, the Electronic Device Recycling Research and Development Act, and H.R. 957, the Green Energy Education Act, both of which passed the House. Protecting the environment is no longer an option, and it's not something we can put off to tomorrow. Our environmental security is crucial to our health and well being, our economy, and even our national security. As we celebrate Earth Day, I am proud to support this important legislation.

The Electronic Device Recycling Research and Development Act will help ensure that today's cutting-edge electronics don't become tomorrow's environmental waste. Technology and innovation have as much a role to play in solving this problem as they did in its creation. Also, there is a real gap in university-level education and training for the next generation of 'green' building professionals. The Green Energy Education Act helps address that gap, so we will have the expertise we need to construct a bright, clean, prosperous future for ourselves and our children.

Coordinating Water Research and Improvement: This month, the House passed H.R. 1145, the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2009. This bill directs the President to implement a program that would coordinate federal, state, local and tribal activities related to water, including research, development, demonstration, data collection and dissemination, education, and technology transfer. I firmly believe in protecting our environment. The sustenance of our ecosystem, and by extension our quality of life, is dependant upon our vigilant and deliberate care. In my District, we know too well the consequences of overlooking our waterways. Our streams and watersheds are threatened and we suffer routinely from problems with storm water runoff and flooding. This bill is an important step in the ongoing process of managing, protecting, and restoring our waterways.

Stimulus funding for Valley Forge and Other Parks: The Department of the Interior released a slate of National Park System projects that will receive nearly \$750 million in funding through

the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. I am pleased to announce that Pennsylvania will receive more than \$14 million in funding, including more than \$2 million for Valley Forge National Historic Park. This implementation of stimulus funding that will spur our economy in the short term while also providing a long-term investment in our future. Valley Forge is a natural and historical treasure, and I am very pleased that it and other great projects in our area will receive the support they need to save jobs and stimulate the economy now, while also ensuring that we pass on to our children a region and nation even greater than the one we inherited.

Increasing transparency and accessibility in FERC procedures: Jim Gerlach (PA-06) and I unveiled new legislation to allow the public greater input and access to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The announcement was made on the property of Louis Ottaviano, of East Caln, one of a group of homeowners who have eminent domain proceedings against them for the expansion of a gas pipeline. One bill, H.R. 1921, would establish an Office of Public Advocate within the Department of Justice to provide services and guidance to citizens in dealing with concerns involving the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Another, H.R. 1922, would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to hold at least one public hearing before issuance of a permit affecting public or private land use in a locality. Accountability and accessibility are the two crucial elements of good government. Unfortunately, in its current operation the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission comes up short in both aspects, but this new legislation can do much to address those shortcomings.

Announcements

Attention Summer Travelers

This summer the State Department will begin to enforce new passport regulations. As of June

1, 2009, U.S. citizens must present a passport book, passport card, or other travel documents approved by the U.S. government to enter the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at all land borders and sea ports of entry. For complete details about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html

All other US passport information, including how to apply and track your application, is available on Department of State's website <http://travel.state.gov> .

Although standard passport processing is currently taking about 4-6 weeks, the new Travel Initiative, combined with the expected seasonal increases in demand, will undoubtedly cause longer processing times. Therefore, I recommend that you apply for your passport well before planned travel.

If you have additional questions about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative or passport processing, please contact my district representative, Eve Massa, at eve.massa@mail.house.gov

'Medicare and You' handbooks will be available electronically in 2010

This is a new development for the Medicare and You Handbook for 2010. As you may know, the handbook, which is a great resource for people with Medicare, is well over 100 pages long. So, in an effort to go green and save taxpayer dollars, starting this fall all Medicare beneficiaries that sign up on <http://www.mymedicare.gov/> by May 31, 2009 will get their Medicare and You books electronically. Those that miss the cut off date can still sign up but will get their books electronically starting fall of 2010.